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SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/NCE, EUR/ERA
AMEMBASSY VIENNA FOR QUINTIN GRAY AND SARAH HANSON
USEU FOR DEBORAH KANAREK

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KSCA](#) [EAGR](#) [FAID](#) [ECON](#) [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [TBIO](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVENIA'S EFFORTS TO FIGHT AVIAN FLU

REF: A. SECSTATE 164314

- [B.](#) LJUBLJANA 614
- [C.](#) LJUBLJANA 652
- [D.](#) SECSTATE 195603

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: In light of the geographic proximity of recent cases of avian flu in neighboring countries, Slovenia realizes it will likely see (and may already have) cases of avian flu within its borders. In order to prevent or at least contain possible outbreaks, the GOS has undertaken a series of measures to increase Slovenia's preparedness. In addition to a ban on the import of poultry from a number of countries, Slovenia has adopted an action plan to address a possible avian flu outbreak. This plan was tested in a live simulation in June 2005 and later updated upon the EU Commission's recommendations in October 2005. Slovenia has also announced that it will begin stockpiling anti-viral drugs in the near future. There is extensive media coverage on avian flu and Slovenia's preparedness for it and there is wide availability of informational brochures in public places around the country. End Summary.

CONTAINMENT

[1](#)2. Due to a recent case of avian flu in neighboring Croatia, the Slovenian Veterinary Administration has temporarily ordered all free-range chickens in Croatian border regions to be transferred indoors. (Note: This case was confirmed on 26 October to be the deadly N5H1 strain. End note.) Veterinary inspectors are closely monitoring the areas close to Croatia and urging farmers to comply with the order. Inspectors have already visited over 190 poultry farms to check farmers' compliance with the measures. In cases of noncompliance, the Veterinary Administration has the authority to levy fines.

[1](#)3. In a further attempt to contain a potential spread of avian flu, the GOS has banned certain imports. Currently, imports of poultry (including eggs, feather products, and stuffed birds) and other birds is prohibited from the following countries: Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Laos, China and Hong Kong, Malaysia, Pakistan, Romania, Russia, North Korea, Thailand, Turkey, Vietnam, and Croatia.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

[1](#)4. As one of the prerequisites for EU accession, in 2004 Slovenia prepared an action plan to address a possible avian flu outbreak. In October 2005, the plan was reviewed by the EU Commission and updated by the Slovenian Veterinary Administration. The plan offers precise, step-by-step instructions for government institutions on how to handle an outbreak of avian flu. The institutions that are involved are: the Ministry of Agriculture and Veterinary Administration (veterinary inspectors and laboratories), Ministry of Health, poultry farmers, police, military, and Civil Defense Agency and Disaster Relief Units. Each institution's tasks and responsibilities are clearly stated in order for all involved parties to understand their role and the roles of others. The Veterinary Administration has posted this action plan on its website (<http://www.sigov.si/vurs/ai.php>) along with other useful information on avian influenza for the general public.

[1](#)5. In order to prove the viability of its contingency plans, in June 2005 the Veterinary Administration coordinated a simulation of an outbreak of three simultaneous cases of avian flu. All institutions involved in the contingency plan took part in the exercise. The simulation was mandated by the EU Commission and followed a previously approved EU-mandated action plan. In addition to the simulation carried out in Slovenia, the Ministry of Health's Public Health Division also participates in avian flu simulations led by the EU.

[1](#)6. In addition to the plans put in place to contain the spread of flu, the Ministry of Health is preparing an action plan that would be used in the event of an avian flu

pandemic affecting the human population. As part of this plan, the Ministry has incorporated recommendations from the recent WHO meeting in Copenhagen. The Ministry will post the action plan on their webpage (<http://www2.gov.si/mz/mz-splet.nsf>) during the week of 31 October. The Health

Ministry also maintains a page in its website that carries important pandemic-flu information. The Ministry has additionally established a telephone hotline, which people can call and ask questions about avian flu.

STOCKPILING OF ANTI-VIRAL DRUGS

17. On 14 October, Health Minister Andrej Brucan announced that Slovenia is preparing a stockpile of the anti-viral drug Tamiflu. Brucan said the Ministry would purchase sufficient stock to supply approximately one quarter of the population or roughly 500,000 doses. The Ministry expects to receive the drug in two separate consignments beginning in early 2006. According to Brucan, Tamiflu would provide important protection in the initial period until an effective vaccine is created. Normal usage of Tamiflu in Slovenia is approximately 1,500 to 2,000 doses per year. The Ministry has said that there is currently no stock of Tamiflu in Slovenia.

MEDIA

18. As in other countries, the media report daily on avian flu cases in nearby countries as well as the Slovene responses to them. Media outlets have also carried reports discussing the possibility of similar occurrences in Slovenia. Brochures prepared by public health officials with information regarding avian flu have been distributed widely in health and other public institutions throughout Slovenia. At the main international airport near the capital, posters with avian flu information have been placed throughout the building explaining to tourists how to lower the risk of infection and transmission of the virus.

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